

**St Mungo's RC High School
Falkirk Council
27 February 2007**

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1. The inspection

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report on the inspection of St Mungo's RC High School in January 2005. Working with the school, the education authority prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original HMIE inspection report.

HM Inspectors revisited the school in November 2006 to assess the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work, and to evaluate progress made in responding to the main points for action in the initial report.

2. Continuous improvement

St Mungo's RC High School had continued to improve the quality of education it provided for its pupils. Since the original inspection, two acting depute headteachers had joined the senior management team. A significant number of new teachers had joined the school staff. Senior managers, faculty and pastoral heads and a number of other key staff had worked together very effectively to develop a climate of shared involvement in improvement across the school. The school continued to have a very positive ethos. Staff were more actively upholding the school's aims of promoting Christian values through daily prayers, assemblies and opportunities for pupils to worship together.

Pupils responded very positively to the school's broad range of approaches to develop their wider achievements. Senior pupils supported younger pupils with their reading. A group of pupils were improving their media skills through running 'Radio St Mungo's'. At all stages, pupils were becoming responsible citizens through actively participating in 'Project India'. This project enabled them to help others while learning to respect and value other cultures. Pupils were able to take part in sporting activities, musical events and a number of other clubs, such as public speaking. The school had significantly increased the number of pupils taking part in Duke of Edinburgh Award schemes. In recognition of the improvements in pupils' self-confidence and ability to work together, around 50 S3 pupils were working towards the Bronze award in place of a Standard Grade. The school also had plans to extend its vocational programme to better meet the needs of groups of pupils.

The school continued to work towards raising pupils' attainment. By the end of S4, the proportions of pupils attaining five or more awards at SCQF¹ levels 4 and 5 had been above the national average. In 2006, they had declined to below the national average at level 4 and in line with the national average at level 5. Pupils' performance in mathematics at S4 remained a cause for concern. By the end of S5, the proportion of pupils attaining one or more award at SCQF level 6 was increasing. On most indicators of performance the school performed in line with similar schools. Staff should continue to develop their approaches to raising pupils' attainment.

¹ Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels:

7: Advanced Higher at A-C/CSYS at A-C

6: Higher at A-C

5: Intermediate 2 at A-C; Standard Grade at 1-2

4: Intermediate 1 at A-C; Standard Grade at 3-4

3: Access 3 cluster; Standard Grade at 5-6

3. Progress towards meeting the main points for action

The initial inspection report published in January 2005 identified five main points for action. This section evaluates the progress made with each of the action points and the resulting improvements for pupils and other stakeholders.

3.1 Raise pupils' attainment overall at S5/S6 and specifically in writing at S1/S2 by improving the quality of learning and teaching.

Overall, the school had made good progress towards addressing this main point for action.

By the end of S6, pupils' attainment had improved for a range of measures in 2006. In particular, there was an increasing trend in the proportions of pupils attaining five or more awards at SCQF levels 4 and 5 and one or more award at SCQF level 6. However, overall, the school needed to improve its performance relative to similar schools by the end of S5 and by the end of S6.

With the support of the education authority, the teachers in the English department had improved their approaches to developing pupils' writing skills. They had increased the level of challenge and had provided pupils with clearer advice and guidance on how to improve their writing. In 2005, by the end of S2 the proportion of pupils achieving appropriate national levels of attainment had improved significantly. The school did not have evidence of improvements in pupils' performance in national assessments by the end of S2 in 2006, because pupils had started their Standard Grade course during S2. The faculty head for language had started to work with other faculty heads to improve the continuity of pupils' learning through more consistency in approaches to the teaching of writing.

The school had introduced a number of initiatives to improve the quality of learning and teaching across the school. Teachers were beginning to share learning outcomes with pupils and were involving pupils more actively in lessons. Pupils spoke positively about lessons where they were given increased responsibility for their own learning and where they were clear about what they were expected to learn. The school should continue to build on the existing good practice and continue to develop approaches to sharing best practice more widely.

3.2 Improve the effectiveness of support for learning as part of an integrated approach to pupil support.

The school had made very good progress in addressing this main point for action.

With very effective support from senior managers, the pastoral head with responsibility for supporting pupils' learning had significantly improved the school's approaches to supporting pupils. She had reviewed the deployment of staff and now more staff were involved in supporting pupils experiencing difficulties with their behaviour or learning. Key teachers were assigned to pupils with additional support needs. Link teachers for each faculty had improved communication across the school. Very comprehensive general advice on supporting pupils experiencing difficulties and specific advice on particular pupils was provided for all staff. Teachers were benefiting from having this information and were being

helped by it to better meet pupils' needs. Individualised educational programmes (IEPs) were in place for those pupils with additional support needs. Parents, pupils, key teachers and teachers were involved in setting and reviewing learning targets. IEPs had significantly improved and contained very helpful information, for example on pupils' learning targets, strengths and interests. The school should further develop its use of IEPs to ensure that they continue to improve pupils' learning experiences.

The school had continued to develop its approach to integrated pupil support. There was a strong sense of teamwork among senior managers, pastoral heads and faculty heads. Pastoral heads and faculty heads now met regularly to discuss the progress of individual pupils. Pastoral heads also met regularly with other staff in the integrated learning community (ILC). The involvement of family workers from the ILC had helped pastoral heads better meet the needs of the most vulnerable pupils. The strong leadership provided by senior managers had significantly improved the quality of the school's approaches to supporting pupils.

3.3 Improve communication and teamwork amongst staff.

The school had made very good progress in addressing this main point for action.

At the time of the original inspection, there had been significant changes to the staffing structure of the school. Staff morale had been affected by these changes. Teachers and support staff were now much more positive about communication and teamwork across the school. Almost all of those who responded to a questionnaire issued by HMIE felt that there was effective communication between senior managers and staff. Almost all felt they had good opportunities to be involved in decision making and the school was well led. A number of staff commented very positively on the changes in the school since the inspection.

The headteacher had introduced more 'commissioning projects' where teachers were able to apply for funding to manage specific projects. Teachers were very positive about these projects which enabled them to develop their leadership skills and make significant contributions to the development work of the school. Participation in these projects had improved teamwork across the school and had allowed staff to develop a strong sense of ownership of school initiatives.

3.4 Improve the impact of the school's processes for self-evaluation.

The school had made very good progress in addressing this main point for action.

The headteacher and senior managers had significantly reviewed their approaches to self-evaluation. The views of parents, pupils and staff were sought on aspects of the work of the school. Their views were valued and changes took place as a result. More staff felt that their opinions were valued. Those staff who managed commissions worked closely with senior managers and faculty heads to ensure that their approach was firmly based on a systematic approach audit. Staff spoke confidently of the benefits of this approach.

Senior managers had continued to develop their approaches to monitoring pupils' learning experiences. There was now a clear agreed focus for classroom visits. Teachers and senior managers discussed outcomes from lessons. In-service days had been used effectively to

share best practice. Faculty heads were also visiting classes to monitor pupils' learning. There were more planned opportunities for teachers to discuss learning and teaching.

The school's approaches to self-evaluation had become more focused and more effective. Teachers felt much more part of the process of self-evaluation and could clearly identify improvements which had come about as a result of self-evaluation.

3.5 Continue to review the remits of the core and extended management team to ensure an appropriate focus on continuous improvement.

The school had made very good progress in addressing this main point for action.

At the time of the inspection, faculty and pastoral heads had only been in post a short time. Following the inspection the school had continued to review the remits of senior managers and faculty and pastoral heads. Staff were now much clearer about their roles and responsibilities. The headteacher had used the commissioning projects effectively to support faculty and pastoral heads with their remits. However, their remits were still extensive and some found them challenging. Faculty heads played a strong role in the decision making processes of the school. They welcomed the opportunities for debate and challenge within the extended management team and felt that this approach was having a positive impact on the school. Senior managers were able to take a more strategic role. They were able to focus more on the impact and outcome of school initiatives.

4. Conclusion

Overall, with the very effective leadership of the headteacher and support from the education authority, the school had made very good progress in addressing the main points for action. Staff demonstrated a strong commitment to continuous improvement and the school had clear capacity for improvement.

Senior managers, faculty and pastoral staff and teachers had successfully implemented improvements which had impacted positively on pupils' learning experiences. The school was very well placed to build on these key improvements and improve further. As a result of the very good progress made HM Inspectors will make no further visits to the school in connection with the report of January 2005. However, attainment in mathematics requires to be improved. The school, with the support of the education authority, should provide a report to HMIE on pupils' attainment in mathematics by September 2007. Parents will be informed about progress.

Maureen McKenna
HM Inspector

27 February 2007

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Education, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, 1st Floor, Endeavour House, 1 Greenmarket, Dundee DD1 4QB or by telephoning 01382 576700. Copies are also available on our website: www.hmie.gov.uk.

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Should you wish to comment on any aspect of follow-through inspections, you should write in the first instance to Annette Bruton, HMCI, HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

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If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to Hazel Dewart, Business Management Unit, HM Inspectorate of Education, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office or by telephoning 01506 600258 or from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 or e-mail ask@spsso.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.spsso.org.uk.

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